United Nations

Press Release

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General tells press after meeting regarding hostage situation that "things are moving at a good pace"; commenting on question of Western Sahara he says "situation has improved and tension has diminished".

- United Nations African Group and Organization of African Unity propose names of 6 candidates for new Secretary-General.

- Decolonization Committee condemns collaboration with South Africa and foreign economic interests impeding decolonization as it concludes work for 1991.

- Fifth United Nations European Regional NGO Symposium on Question of Palestine opens in Vienna.

- President of General Assembly visits Kiev, Warsaw and Vienna.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar commented today in Geneva on the situation of detainees held in Lebanon and Israel, saying things were "moving at a good pace."

He told correspondents that his emissary to Israel, Giandomenico Picco, had briefed him about his efforts in the area. The Secretary-General maintained the hope that something "very important could happen in the sense of seeing all the detainees freed". He said he would receive an emissary from Iran, most likely Ambassador Kharazzi, tomorrow, and that he had already been in touch with the Israelis.

In reply to questions, the Secretary-General said he was expecting a breakthrough by the end of the month or the beginning of next month. The problem was one of an exchange, he said.

On the question of Western Sahara, the Secretary-General told the press that his worries earlier today about the situation in the region had been

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"greatly diminished". He said his previous concern had been based on information regarding military activities in the area and that the situation had improved and the tension diminished after his appeal this morning.

Earlier today, the Secretary-General had expressed concern over recent developments in Western Sahara and called for "immediate, determined and constructive action in full cooperation with the parties."

The Secretary-General is scheduled to meet in Geneva with representatives of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) on Tuesday.

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In the run-up to the forthcoming election of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, the African Group has proposed the names of six candidates.

The names have been put forward by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) through their representatives, in a joint letter of 22 August to the President of the Security Council, signed by Chairman of the African Group, Ambassador Nabil Elaraby of Egypt, and Ambassador Ibrabim Gambari of Nigeria.

In the letter, the two Ambassadors expressed the hope that the international community will give an African an opportunity to serve the United Nations at a critical time when new opportunities have arisen for the Organization to discharge its world responsibilities due to the current developments.

The election for the new Secretary-General will be held in the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, scheduled to begin 17 September.

The names of the six African candidates are: Ghali Boutros of Egypt, Bernard Chidzero of Zambia, Kenneth Dadzie of Ghana, James Jonah of Sierra Leone, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Nguema Francois Owono of Gabon.

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The Special Committee on Decolonization has concluded its work for 1991 by recommending that all countries intensify their efforts in the specialized agencies and other United Nations organizations to ensure full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. The text was adopted by a vote of 20 in favour to none against, with 4 abstentions.

In separate votes on different paragraphs of the same resolution, the Committee noted with great concern the extensive links and collaboration between the apartheid regime of South Africa and certain countries, in the political, diplomatic, economic, nuclear, military and other fields. It also condemned the growing military and nuclear cooperation between South Africa and Israel.

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In a separate development, the Special Committee reaffirmed that administering Powers should ensure that the existence of military bases and installations did not hinder the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories from exercising their rights to self-determination.

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The Fifth United Nations European Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, on the role of Europe in securing Palestinian rights, began today in Vienna.

Opening the two-day Symposium, the Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Absa Claude Diallo (Senegal), said that by their myriad of valuable activities, European non-governmental organizations had contributed to creating a greater awareness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and to mobilizing support for the adoption of concrete measures. The countries of Europe could play an important role in advancing the common objective. As representatives of the conscience of the European public, non-governmental organizations could have an important influence on the official opinion and policies in Europe.

She informed the Symposium that the Israeli authorities had denied an exit permit to a panelist, Sa'eb Erakat, Associate Professor of Political Science at An-Najah National University in Nablus, thereby preventing him from attending the Symposium. She protested against such arbitrary decisions which infringed upon the right of the Palestinian people to move around, and said a Member State should not prevent persons from taking part in United Nations meetings.

Organized by the Palestinian Rights Committee, the Symposium aims to increase awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and to create a more favourable atmosphere for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Committee.

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The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco (Malta), is in Warsaw today on a three-day official visit. He is expected to meet with the Polish Foreign Minister and other senior officials.

The President arrived in Warsaw Sunday from Kiev, where he met with Ukrainian government officials and visited the site of the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Both visits were made in his dual capacity as President of the General Assembly and as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta.

The President is to conclude his current tour with a visit to Vienna from 27 to 29 August, where he will attend the Eighth United Nations International Negotiating Group Meeting on the Question of Palestine in his capacity as Assembly President. He will make a statement to the meeting on Wednesday, 28 August.

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